



Australian Association for  
Infant Mental Health

Australian Association for Infant Mental Health

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AAIMH National Chairperson's Report: Nicole Milburn

Nov 21st, 2022 AAIMH Annual General Meeting:

**The 2021/22 Board:**

**Chairperson:** Nicole Milburn (Vic).

**Secretary:** Michelle Fryer (Qld).

**Treasurer:** Mary Hood (SA).

**Branch Reps/ Board Directors:** Sally Watson (SA), Joe Coyne (Qld), Cath McPhee (Vic), Rubela Wilborn (WA), (NSW, vacant), Danielle Kurr (ACT). Caroline Diamond (Tas).

**Membership Secretary** Heather Warne

**Website Coordinator:** Abby Chee

**Competency Guidelines National Project Leader:** Gally McKenzie

**Project Officer:** Brendan Cook, position funded, 4 hours per week.

**Executive Support:** Margaret Turner, funded 4 hours per week, replacing Vicki Matheson

**Competencies Project Officer:** Stephanie Rea (5 months)

**Subcommittees:**

**IMHAW:** Caroline Diamond (Chair)

**Governance:** Joe Coyne (Qld) Nicole Milburn (Vic) & Gally McKenzie (WA)

**Education:** Joe Coyne (Qld) and Sally Watson (SA)

**Research and Advocacy:** Cath McPhee (Vic)

**Finance:** National and Branch Treasurers

**Australian Association for Infant Mental Health Limited**

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Our year from November 2021 has seen continued waves of pandemic and natural disasters. As I write in November 2022 we are at the beginning of our next wave of Covid-19 and much of NSW and Northern Victoria is suffering major flooding. Our babies, toddlers and preschoolers and their families also seem to be getting every virus that was dormant during the last two years, and families face rolling sicknesses. Some of the old ways of doing things have returned, and we can all rejoice in being able to travel to see friends and family again.

AAIMH has been very active again in 2022. It does seem as if every time we try to get together there is a covid wave, but we have managed to work with it in the second half of this year. The Board had a half day of planning via Zoom in February 2022, and followed up with an in person event in August. This was the first time the AAIMH Board has come together since February 2020, and was a great time to strengthen our relationships and progress the work.

Supporting relationships is at the very core of our work and we are focusing on bringing our members and colleagues together now and going forward. The infant mental health workforce is diverse and particularly passionate, dedicated to advocating for the youngest and most vulnerable of our community who often have little or no voice, and this work is as rewarding as it is challenging at times. The professional community of AAIMH is a secure base to return to, to feel safe in being with people who understand the importance of the years from conception to age three and being confident you won't have to argue with someone who says 'they won't remember it anyway'.

It seems that many of our colleagues are fatigued and perhaps reluctant to come to in person events, and that is quite understandable given the chronic stress of the last three years. With the climate emergency accelerating it is sadly unlikely that we will have much relief from stress and disasters, and so all we can do is buffer ourselves from toxic stress. Coming together is one of the best self-care strategies in a professional sense, and we look forward to more in person AAIMH events in 2022/23.

As always, AAIMH is mostly reliant upon volunteers. The Board, branch committee members and those in specific roles put in untold hours of work for AAIMH, and I am very grateful for their continued dedication. Together we have all achieved much over the reporting period. I am very grateful to the Board for continuing in our collective efforts, it's such a privilege to work with highly skilled and dedicated people. This AGM we farewell Rubela Wilborn from her two years as a director, welcome Jane Kolkjoff from NSW and Sara Browne from WA.

This year we also announce the formation of a new branch for the Northern Territory and the appointment of Karen Hazell Raine to the Board. We now have branches in all states and territories of Australia!

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The Vision and Mission of AAIMH are:

### Vision

The needs of every infant and young child from before birth to age three are prioritised and addressed in a timely and responsive way to enhance their relationships and their mental health and wellbeing.

### Mission

Our Mission is to work for all infants and young children from pre birth to age three to ensure their social, emotional and developmental needs are met through stable and nurturing relationships within their family, culture and communities.

AAIMH has focused internally to an extent in 2022, with major projects being the website redesign and the transition to a new IT system. The website redesign came from a decision to focus upon the website as the vehicle for communication rather than enter into social media.

In 2021 we adopted a new 3 year strategic plan to progress our mission. At the end of the second year of the strategic plan, we have achieved the following:

#### 1. **Advocate and collaborate for infants and young children through improving professional and public recognition within relevant networks.**

##### Activities

- Perform activities to celebrate International Infant Mental Health Awareness Week
- Join with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and professionals to advocate for the needs of First Nations infants and their families.
- Provide resources for caregivers and families
- Identify and link to relevant networks, including liaising with affiliated international colleagues
- Develop a National Advocacy Agenda that includes state as well as national priorities
- Provide information to members

Progress in 2022:

1.1 The Theme for International Infant Mental Health Awareness Week (IMHAW) in 2022 was 'understanding early trauma', and events were held in a number of branches to celebrate. The SA Branch partnered with Healthy Development Adelaide and held a seminar on Understanding Early Trauma, which was recorded and is available on the

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seminars and training link on the SA page of the website. The ACT branch held a screening of the Robertson film "A two-year old goes to hospital" to prompt discussions related to contemporary issues of parents and infants/children and separations. Dr Judy Bragg and Dr Sue Packer provided reflections on the film and facilitated discussion regarding current practices.

1.2 The redevelopment of the website has been a major project of the Board in 2022. The project was seeded with money from the National Board and a website designer provided a framework. The framework was then progressed by a volunteer member, Abby Chee, with support from Board members and the Executive Assistant. Abby Chee has spent many unpaid hours on the website, for which we are all very grateful. Highlights of the website are:

- A new page 'For Parents' has been established for resources for parents.
- Outdated material has been removed.
- The resources for professionals are all located on a 'for professionals' page for easy navigation.
- Position Statements and Guidelines also have their own page.

1.3 AAIMH has collaborated with an Aboriginal Elder in the preparation of a new Position Statement and most of the branches have worked with their local Aboriginal communities to further our collaboration. For example, the SA Branch continued working with the "Deadly Nannas" a group of Aboriginal women based in Murray Bridge who are supporting families who presented at AAIMH Conference in Adelaide in 2019 and Victoria invited Mishel McMahon, proud Yorta Yorta woman, to present at the National Conference.

1.4 The SA Branch has representation on the Raising Literacy Australia Committees (Raising Literacy Australia works with the community to improve literacy levels in children from infancy).

## **2. Increase the capacity of those directly involved in developing or advocating for policy or services that provide support to infants and young children through provision of education, professional development, and the dissemination of scientific knowledge.**

Activities:

- Generate and update position statements
- Deliver a biannual National Conference
- Develop a Media/Social Media presence to disseminate scientific knowledge, position statements
- Investigate development of podcast framework and delivery
- Training opportunities: access to trainers & supervision

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- Deliver a biannual Speaker Tour
- Develop mentoring opportunities for members
- Support AAIMH members to seek out opportunities to join relevant advisory and working groups that inform policy and workforce development planning
- Support AAIMH members to contribute to feedback rounds during the development of national frameworks and strategies that impact on infancy and families; membership to be provided with submission templates they can adapt
  - Provide scholarships to support attendance at professional development events.

## Progress in 2022

2.1 There has been progress on three position statements:

- a. the Sleep paper has been finalised and is on the website.
- b. The Continuity of Relationships paper has been finalised and will be launched at the AGM.
- c. A paper on the needs of infants in refuge is under development with the expertise of Dr Wendy Bunston

2.2 AAIMH runs a biannual National Conference, scheduled to occur between WAIMH Congresses. The last National Conference was in 2019 in Adelaide. Although due in 2021, the conference was postponed a year to accommodate the WAIMH Congress in Brisbane, that was rescheduled from 2020 to 2021 because of the pandemic.

This year the Board was keen to bring people together in person, however was also cautious due to the risk of border closures impacting upon national events. A hybrid model was developed where conference events would occur in person in each branch, bookended by a livestreamed opening and plenary and a presentation about the competency framework and the AGM presentation and meeting.

In response to the last few years of pandemic and natural disasters, the theme of the conference was 'Choosing Infant mental Health Wellness to grow the new world'.

So our national conference comprised events in most of the states, bookended by an opening plenary and a live session on the competency framework and talk by attachment expert Danya Glaser at the AGM. We will then offer the full conference as an online package in 2023, comprising the following:

Christopher Tosh Dawson welcomed participants live and online in Brisbane on behalf of the Turrbal people.

Plenary: Mr. Matthew Melmed, CEO of Zero to Three, *'Think babies, Think hope!'*.

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Local events:

- Anna Huber presented at the First 1000 Days conference in Canberra
- Sharon Dawe: Title - *Parenting, emotional regulation and substance use: investigating the process of change*. Queensland
- Judith Howard: Title - *A Trauma-Aware approach to their education for safety, connection and trust*. Queensland.
- Michael Hogan: Title - *Changing Systems and Building Brains for Life: Thriving QLD Kids Partnership* Queensland
- Sue Kruske: Title - *Using the RISE framework to drive service reform and enhance infant mental health*. Queensland
- The South Australian Branch partnered with the Helen Mayo House Conference
- Annette Fuller from the Coalition Tasmanian AAIMH Branch Title: *"It Takes a Tasmanian Village"*, Tasmania
- Mishel McMahon Title: *First Nations Concepts for Selfhood: A Child's Journey from Spirit Self to Social Self*. Victoria
- Professor Helen Milroy address, WA
- C. Gally McKenzie and Nicole Milburn: *The AAIMH Competency Guidelines for Culturally Sensitive Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health*- National live
- Dr Danya Glaser Visiting Professor at UCL and Honorary Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, London. *Attachment and Child Protection*.
- Launch of the AAIMH Position Paper "Continuity of Relationships"
- AGM

2.3 The Branch committees are the powerhouse of AAIMH and have provided rich training and professional development opportunities in the reporting period.

Some of the branch offerings are provided below:

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Victoria: "Incorporating Infant Mental Health into Nursing Practice"- Michele Meehan

- "The highs and lows of working with infants and their parents with personality disorders", Louise Newman and Izaak Lim
- "Listening to the Infants in a Refuge". Emma van Daal and Wendy Bunston presenting "

South Australia: Webinar with Maria Aarts, developer of Marte Meo in July.

Tasmania have trailed a journal club in 2022.

## 2.4 Scholarships to support learning

2.4.1 Sue Morse Scholarship provides access to high quality supervision for a year for the successful applicant/s. Funded by a bequest by long term member and gifted Infant Mental Health specialist from Victoria, Sue Morse.

2.4.2 Applications for Philanthropy Grants, have been opened. SA Branch allocates up to \$20,000 for these grants for South Australian members. Each year, the AAIMH SA committee decides whether and how the funds will be allocated. This may vary from year to year. The money available may be divided into a number of grants of varying amounts allocated in any year, including attending training, conferences, and developing resources. Not all funds may be allocated each year. A specific scholarship of up to \$2,000 has been created for MBT training called the Clara Bookless Scholarship, a former member and committee member of SA Branch, who recently died, in honour of the role she played in bringing MBT to Australia.

2.4.3 Up to 4 scholarships (2 full and 2 half) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or people primarily working with ATSI people to complete ABC training

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### **3. Educate, inform, and support professionals to implement evidence informed professional competencies and standards in infant mental health.**

#### Activities:

Develop a plan to support the implementation of competency frameworks for members and organisations.

#### 2022 Achievements:

WA continues to lead the way in implementation of the competency framework, and has taken the path of offering endorsement, which is not offered in the rest of Australia as yet. WA has an enormously dedicated endorsement committee

#### Endorsement

In 2021-2022, AAIMH WA increased the reach of IMH Endorsement® thanks to a Mental Health Commission grant of \$117,840 for the Endorsement project. The term of this grant was extended (without additional funding) to 31 December 2022

Since 1 July 2021, 11 practitioners have undertaken IMH Endorsement. They represent a wide range of disciplines across government, non-government and private practice

At 30 June 2022, there were 18 IMH-Endorsed practitioners in WA

The AAIMH national board is building on AAIMH WA's work to implement the IMH Competency Framework across Australia, and 2022 we progressed the implementation of the Competency Framework throughout AAIMH via a funded project, employing a Project Officer initially and then appointing an ex-officio Board Position of Competencies Project Leader. Meetings have occurred with branches and there has been a presentation as part of the national conference. Planning is underway for a site visit from the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health for 2024.

The Competency Framework is available on the website for all to view and use. AAIMH's goal in implementing the Competency Framework across Australia is to align the professional development and support offerings of AAIMH to the competencies to assist members in their own professional development and organisations in their broader workforce development efforts.

In tandem with the work on the competency framework implementation we have also been collating branch events into a national events calendar. In 2020 the Board decided to offer all branch events to all members and a national calendar was conceptualised as a way to help members plan their PD and attendance at events.

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## 4 Reviewing and enhancing good governance

### Activities:

- Annual governance training for Board and Committees
- Yearly review of governance and processes
- Register of governance issues arising during Board and Branch Committee meetings
- Growing and supporting membership diversity (e.g. through scholarships and free membership)
- Develop and implement an ongoing framework to seek and incorporate member feedback
- Establish a framework to ensure community and stakeholder input

### 2022 Achievements:

4.1 Annual governance training has been delivered at the planning day.

4.2 A risk workshop and development of a risk framework was conducted at the August planning day.

4.3 The Board conducted its first self evaluation in 2022 to provide the Board with information about the performance of the Board and areas that need further support, development or training.

4.4 The Governance committee has been working on a governance manual that will comprise policies and procedures and contribute to the sustainability of the organisation.

4.5 A major activity of the Board this year has been transitioning to the Microsoft suite of programs. This was viewed as a more efficient and sustainable process, and will save AAIMH money through streamlining and retiring of other costly subscriptions. Microsoft offers free access to the suite for not for profit organisations.

In practice this means that AAIMH will offer seminars using Microsoft Teams rather than Zoom, and the Zoom licence has not been renewed. The Board and Branch committees will also have access to an AAIMH Sharepoint, which will hold all documents for AAIMH. This will contribute to the governance of the organisation as it will enable the Board and Branches to easily access policy and procedure documents, which will ensure more efficient practice.

4.6 The Board has worked with the New South Wales committee, which has been in recess in 2022, to resume activities in 2023 with a newly appointed Director appointed at the AGM.

4.7 A Northern Territory Branch is being established at the time of writing.

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**AAIMH Membership Numbers Overall to date: 412, increase of 16 from this time last year**

ACT: 15 (no change) NSW: 38 (-13) Qld: 46 (+2) SA: 74 (+14) Tas:10 (-2) Vic:126 -5)  
WA: 107 (+20)



Dr Nicole Milburn  
Board Chair

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